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ABSTRACT

The New York City Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Center provided technical assistance and training to members of the instructional and administrative staffs working with limited-English-proficient (LEP) students throughout the city's 32 community school districts and the division of high schools. Specifically, in 1987-88 the program successfully: (1) provided technical assistance to schools with large numbers of LEP students; (2) planned and implemented citywide conferences for LEP students' parents speaking Chinese, Greek, Spanish, and Russian; (3) provided technical assistance to improve identification and placement of LEP students in bilingual education and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs; (4) provided technical assistance to bilingual/ESL programs to improve delivery of instructional services; (5) provided assistance to improve program evaluation; (6) planned and implemented the citywide Spanish spelling bee; (7) sponsored a statewide institute for supervisors and administrators on LEP student needs; and (8) conducted a citywide needs assessment and staff development project in mathematics and science for district personnel working with LEP students. Recommendations include exploring ways of addressing participants' requests for future workshops and developing a separate evaluation form for the parent conferences. (MSE)

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OREA Report

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

NEW YORK CITY BILINGUAL EDUCATION
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER
(BETAC)

1987-1988

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EVALUATION SECTION
John Schoener, Chief Administrator
June 1989

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

NEW YORK CITY BILINGUAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (BETAC)

1987-1988

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER*
1987-88

SUMMARY

- The New York City Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Center (BETAC) provided technical assistance and training to members of the instructional and administrative staffs working with students of limited English proficiency (LEP) throughout the city's 32 community school districts and the Board of Education's Division of High Schools.

- BETAC successfully implemented the program for the 1987-88 school year.

BETAC, in its fifth year of operation, was administered by the Office of Bilingual Education (O.B.E.) of the New York City Board of Education. It was funded by the New York State Education Department's (N.Y.S.E.D.) Bureau of Bilingual Education. Its staff included a full-time director, resource teacher, and secretary as well as two part-time consultants.

In 1987-88, BETAC successfully:

- provided technical assistance to CAR schools with large numbers of LEP students;

- planned and implemented citywide conferences for LEP students' parents speaking Chinese, Greek, Spanish, and Russian;

- provided technical assistance to improve the identification and placement of LEP students in bilingual education/E.S.L. programs;

- provided technical assistance to bilingual education/E.S.L. programs to improve the delivery of instructional services;
- provided technical assistance to improve the evaluation of bilingual education/E.S.L. programs;

- planned and implemented the citywide Spanish spelling bee;

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*This summary is based on the final evaluation of the "Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Center (Project BETAC) 1987-88" prepared by the OREA Bilingual Education Evaluation Unit.

- sponsored a statewide institute for supervisors and administrators on the needs of LEP students; and

- conducted a citywide needs assessment and staff development project in the areas of mathematics and science for district personnel working with LEP students.

Information was unavailable as to whether BETAC provided technical assistance to two-way bilingual education programs or developed a comprehensive plan for multicultural/multilingual education for C.S.D. 32, as specified in the program's objectives.

Previous years' reports for BETAC cited the constant change in directors as an obstacle to the project's progress. Although there was a change in directors again in 1987-88, the person chosen to direct BETAC had been the director two years prior to the year under review and was familiar with the project's objectives and overall operation. Thus, this situation was not an obstacle to program success this year.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Explore ways of addressing participants' requests for future workshops.

- Develop a separate evaluation form for the parent conferences, rather than one which is oriented toward educators.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. EVALUATION FINDINGS 3

Implementation..... 3
Project Objectives..... 3

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 8

I. INTRODUCTION

The New York City Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Center (BETAC), funded by the Bureau of Bilingual Education of the New York State Education Department (N.Y.S.E.D.), was administered by the Office of Bilingual Education (O.B.E.) of the New York City Board of Education. BETAC provided technical assistance to the 32 community school districts (C.S.D.s) throughout the city, as well as to the Division of High Schools. The staff consisted of a full-time director, a full-time resource specialist, two part-time consultants, and one full-time secretary.

The Board of Education established the centrally-based Technical Assistance Center in 1984 to assist school personnel in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of bilingual education programs citywide. In order to accomplish this goal, BETAC's responsibilities were to: (1) provide community school district and high school personnel with technical assistance and training on laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to instructional programs for LEP students; and (2) assist O.B.E. in developing a comprehensive plan for bilingual education in the New York City public schools in accordance with Part 154 of the N.Y.S.E.D. Commissioner's Regulations.

BETAC coordinated activities with other O.B.E. units, other parts of the Board of Education, and outside agencies. It produced and disseminated materials on bilingual education and English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) to school district

personnel and others working with students of limited English proficiency (LEP).

Although the basic objectives for BETAC during the 1987-88 academic year were the same as in the previous year, the program implemented minor changes based on field requests and the project's annual needs assessment. Changes included: (1) the addition of two citywide parent conferences--one in Russian and one in Spanish, (2) the addition of a statewide conference for supervisors and administrators working with LEP students, and (3) the elimination of technical assistance activities in the area of bilingual special education due to the lack of funding.

The following section describes the implementation of BETAC activities, and the program's progress in accomplishing its objectives. Data for this program evaluation was obtained from workshop evaluation questionnaires and from interviews with BETAC staff and service recipients.

II. EVALUATION FINDINGS

IMPLEMENTATION

BETAC provided technical assistance and training to personnel who work with LEP students and to the parents of such students. Field practitioners made numerous specific requests to BETAC in the areas of staff development, parental workshops, materials translation, testing, grant development, budgetary issues, and early childhood bilingual education. According to BETAC's project director, the center received and handled an average of 35 technical assistance calls daily. Program staff either answered the questions, frequently integrated the subjects of these requests into BETAC workshops and activities, or referred the callers to other agencies or offices within the Board of Education.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Each of the project's objectives is listed below, followed by a discussion of the manner in which it was accomplished. In two instances, there were not sufficient data to make that determination.

- To provide technical assistance to CAR* schools with large numbers of LEP students.

Many of the telephone requests described above were from CAR schools with large LEP populations. Betac provided

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*CAR refers to schools cited in the N.Y.S.E.D.'s Comprehensive Assessment Report for low achievement in reading and writing.

technical assistance to many of these schools be either providing assistance on the telephone or offering workshops and activities geared to their needs. The project accomplished this objective.

- To plan and implement citywide conferences for LEP students' parents speaking the following languages: Spanish, Chinese, Haitian, Greek, Russian.

BETAC assisted the Syracuse/Ithaca Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in conducting an institute for parents' advisory councils. It conducted five parent conferences: two in Spanish, one in Greek, one in Russian, and one in Chinese.

OREA staff observed three workshops. Topics at the Greek workshop included safeguarding children from drugs, special education in New York State, the influence of television on children, physical fitness programs, and how to help children with mathematics.

One Spanish-language workshop included information on educational programs and community services, strategies for participating in children's education, positive discipline, detecting learning disabilities, and helping children select high schools and colleges. Participants in this workshop indicated that they would like to see future workshops include information on helping children prepare for exams, on preventing sexually transmitted diseases, on communication between parents and children, and on drug prevention. A second Spanish-language workshop included topics on the new immigration law, educational

opportunities for parents at the college level, and myths and facts about AIDS. Participants overwhelmingly commended the workshop.

The large parent turnout, the comments and ratings of the participants, and observations of the workshops indicated that the workshops were helpful.

- To provide technical assistance to improve the identification and placement of LEP students in bilingual education/E.S.L. programs.

BETAC completed the translation and printing of two parallel forms of the Standard Diagnostic Math Test in Spanish, Chinese, French, and Haitian Creole. The center also assisted schools and C.S.D.s in testing students. BETAC therefore accomplished this objective.

- To provide technical assistance to bilingual education/E.S.L. programs to improve the delivery of instructional services.

BETAC helped BOCES adapt the N.Y.S.E.D. Computer Instructional Management Systems (CIMS) syllabus for mathematics and establish a statewide bilingual early childhood network. It offered staff development on the instruction of science and mathematics for bilingual educators and held a three-day science and mathematics educational seminar for bilingual/E.S.L. elementary school teachers. The program successfully implemented the above objective.

- To provide technical assistance to improve the evaluation of bilingual education/E.S.L. programs.

BETAC provided technical assistance in the preparation, processing, and administration of grants funded under New York State Bilingual Categorical Funds. It also provided individual assistance as needed. The project accomplished the above objective.

- To assist in planning and implementing the Spanish spelling bee.

The project assisted in the planning and implementation of the Spanish spelling bee and fulfilled requests to serve as spelling bee judges. In accomplishing these tasks it met the stated objective.

- To sponsor a statewide institute for supervisors and administrators on the needs of LEP students.

BETAC cosponsored a statewide institute for supervisors and administrators entitled "Assessing the Needs of the Limited English Proficient Student in Comprehensive School Improvement Plans." Participants indicated overwhelmingly that the institute had been beneficial. They said that they had learned how to better meet the needs of LEP children, had increased their knowledge of regulations, had acquired information on grants, and had increased their understanding of language acquisition processes.

BETAC also worked with BOCES in the planning and implementation of a statewide conference on increasing the numbers of LEP students who complete high school.

BETAC therefore accomplished the above objective.

- To conduct a citywide needs assessment and staff development project in the areas of mathematics and science for district personnel working with LEP students.

BETAC conducted a citywide needs assessment on science and mathematics topics for bilingual/E.S.L. programs. It offered staff development based on these topics and held a three-day science and mathematics educational seminar for bilingual and E.S.L. teachers on the elementary school level. It was evident from the documentary data provided that the staff development effort was highly effective: field practitioners praised the presenters' content and delivery. Thus, the program achieved the objective.

- To provide technical assistance to two-way bilingual education programs.
- To develop a comprehensive plan for multicultural/ multilingual education for C.S.D. 32.

There are no data available to assess the attainment of either of these objectives.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BETAC provided technical assistance and training for personnel who work with the LEP student population in the New York City public schools. The center demonstrated that it has been responsive to field requests for assistance. In addition, BETAC's outreach to parents and to the community at large was particularly noteworthy. This was illustrated by the high attendance rates at parent conferences, and the number of topics geared toward community issues in the conference workshops.

In conclusion, BETAC has shown that it plays a key role in the LEP community. Despite fiscal constraints, BETAC continued its efforts to meet, modify, and expand its objectives in serving its target population.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Explore ways of addressing participants' requests for future workshops.
- Develop a separate evaluation form for the parent conferences, rather than one oriented toward educators.